Unification of services in telecom sector

414. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether in the light of the TRAI's proposal for full unification of services in telecom sector, the cellular operators have suggested for adoption of a two-tier structure which entails circular-wise licensing and an all India unified telecom license; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEELAHMAD): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has suggested to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India for adoption of a two-tier service area classification namely;

(i) Circle-wise licensing as applicable to the Cellular Operators, Unified Access Licensees, etc.

(ii) An All India Unified Licence.

Attacks on Indians in Gulf countries

415. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the increasing attacks towards the life and property of Indians working in Gulf and other middle east countries;

(b) if so, the details of such attacks during the last three years including loss of property and life, year-wise, country-wise and category-wise;

(c) whether any action has been taken for an early access of the Indian citizens to the Indian Embassies after the mishap;

(d) its so, the details thereof; and

(e) the financial compensation, if any, provided to Indians and the reasons for increasing number of such incidents towards Indians?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No. There are no reports of increasing attacks on Indians in Gulf countries;

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) Indian Missions/Posts abroad are always accessible to Indians including those in distress. In countries with large number of Indian workers, Indian Missions/Posts have separate Labour/Welfare wings to attend to issues and problems faced by them. From 8th of July our Mission in Riyadh and Jeddah have started "Open House" on Second Thursday of every month from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. for Indians in Saudi Arabia to interact with Mission Officials to resolve their problems, if any.

(e) Does not arise.

Indian in Kot Lakhpat Jail

416. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 80 Indians are languishing in Kot Lakhpat Jail in Lahore, Pakistan, even after completing their period of imprisonment;

(b) if so, whether the Goverrnment have taken any action to bring them back;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether this issue has come up before the Secretary-level talks that took place on 27th and 28th June, 2004; and

(e) if so, the outcome of the discussion on this issue?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED) (a) to (e) As per available information, a large number of Indian civilian prisoners are believed to be in Pakistan's custody.

The Government, through diplomatic channels, have been consistently taking up with Pakistan the issue of early release and repatriation of such prisoners.

The matter was once again taken up during the Foreign Secretary level talks with Pakistan that were held in New Delhi on June, 27-28, 2004 and agreed steps included in the Joint Statement.